MARVEL COMICS
4
CAN EVEN THE FANTASTIC FOUR SURVIVE THE TERRIBLE TRUTH!?!
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$1.50 US
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THE DARK RAIDER REVEALED!!!

BEN GRIMM, THE THING! SUE RICHARDS, INVISIBLE WOMAN! JOHNNY STORM, THE HUMAN TORCH! TRANSFORMED BY AN ACCIDENT IN OUTER SPACE INTO SOMETHING MUCH MORE THAN HUMAN, THEY VOWED TO USE THEIR AWESOME POWERS TO HELP MANKIND CHART THE UNKNOWN. STAN LEE PRESENTS. . .

THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
IT ALL BEGAN WITH A DREAM... A DREAM TO CREATE A STARSHIP WHICH COULD TRAVEL THROUGH HYPERSPACE TO OTHER SOLAR SYSTEMS.
A DREAM WHICH EVENTUALLY LED TO A HASTILY PREPARED TEST FLIGHT!
BOMBARDED BY HEAVY COSMIC RADIATION, THE FOUR CREW MEMBERS DEVELOPED SUPERHUMAN POWERS!
PLEDGING TO USE THEIR INCREDIBLE NEW ABILITIES FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND, THEY BECAME THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
BUT NOW, EVEN AS HE CURSES THE CRUEL AND UNCARING CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH HAVE LED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL HE HAS EVER LOVED, DR. REED RICHARDS REALIZES THE DREAM IS FINALLY DEAD--
--AS LIFELESS AS THE BODY OF HIS BELOVED WIFE, SUSAN RICHARDS!

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THE FINAL GAUNTLET!

HAVING CHOSEN THIS WORLD TO PROVIDE HIM WITH THE MONUMENTAL ENERGY HE NEEDS TO SUSTAIN HIMSELF, THE AWESOME GALACTUS HAS PLUNDERED THE EARTH!

EMPLOYING HIS UNCANNY ELEMENTAL CONVERTER TO TRANSFORM THE VERY OCEANS INTO PURE ENERGY, HE HAS STRIPPED AWAY ALL POWER ...ALL VITALITY... ALL LIFE!

WHILE MR. FANTASTIC JOURNEYED TO A DISTANT DIMENSION TO FIND A WEAPON POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STOP GALACTUS--

--HIS THREE COMPANIONS HEROICALLY BATTLED TO PRESERVE A PLANET!

THEIR DEATHS WERE FAR FROM PLEASANT!

FEATURING A STARTLING TURNING POINT IN THE SAGA OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-TEAM BY...

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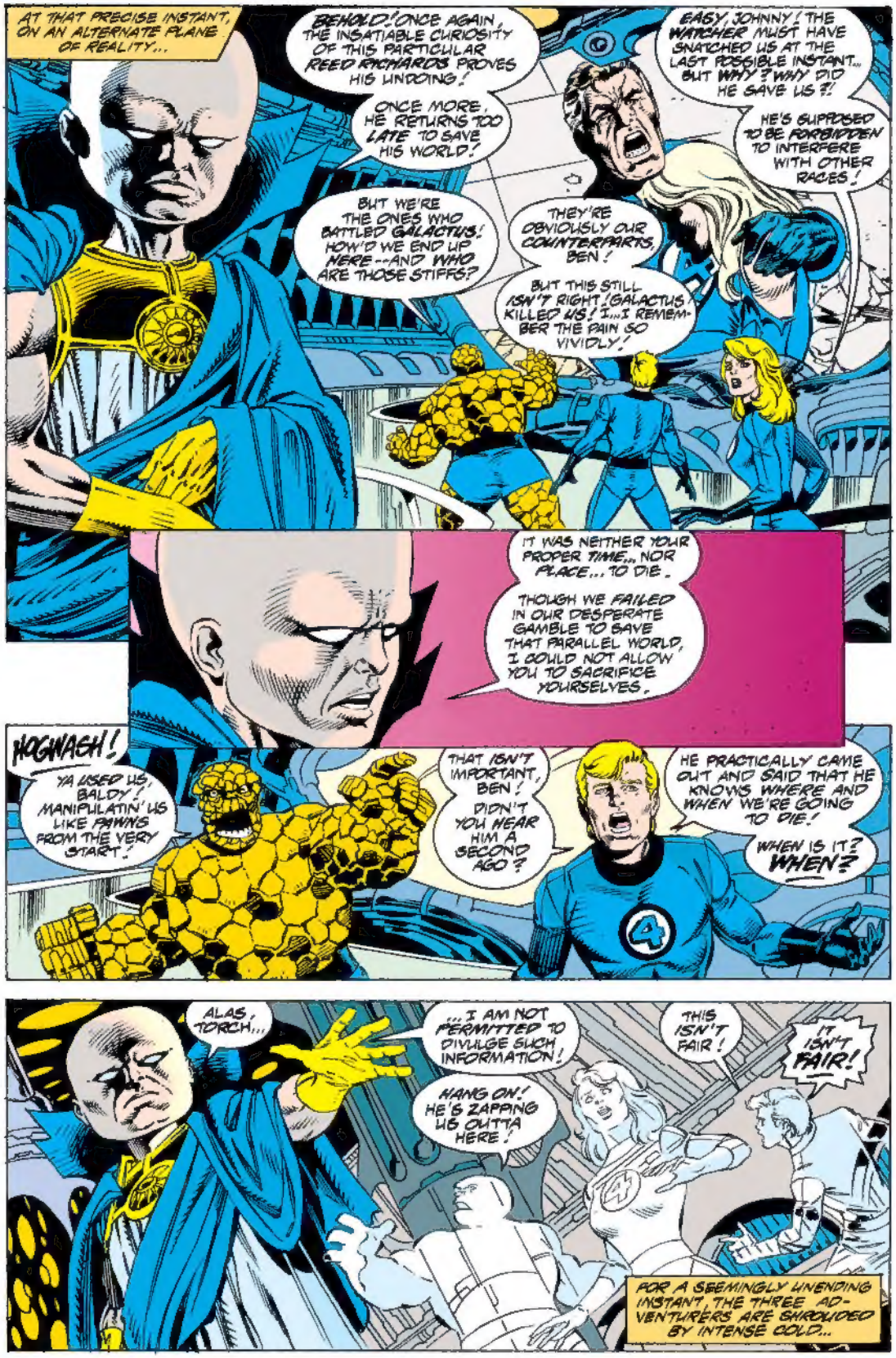
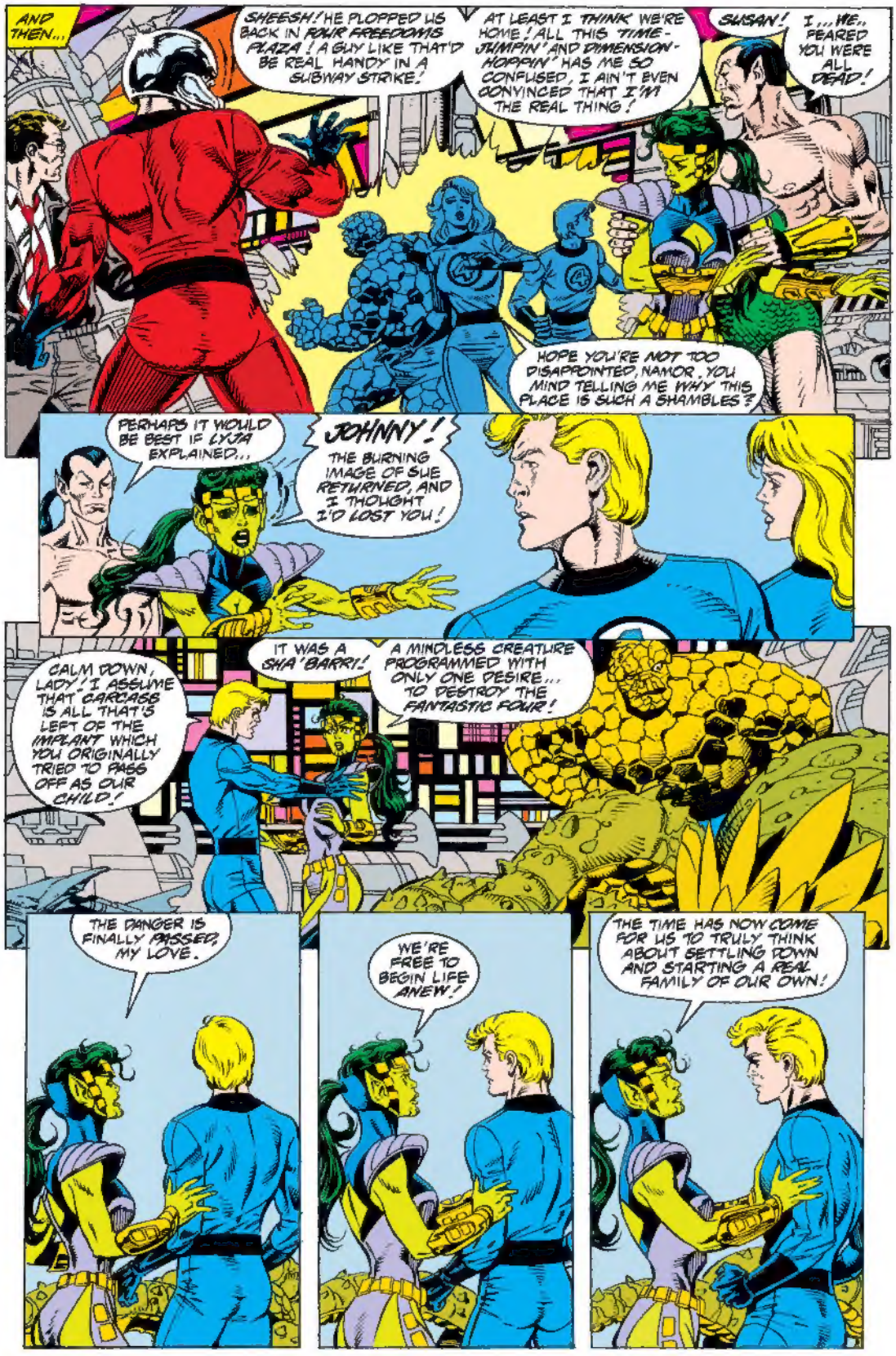
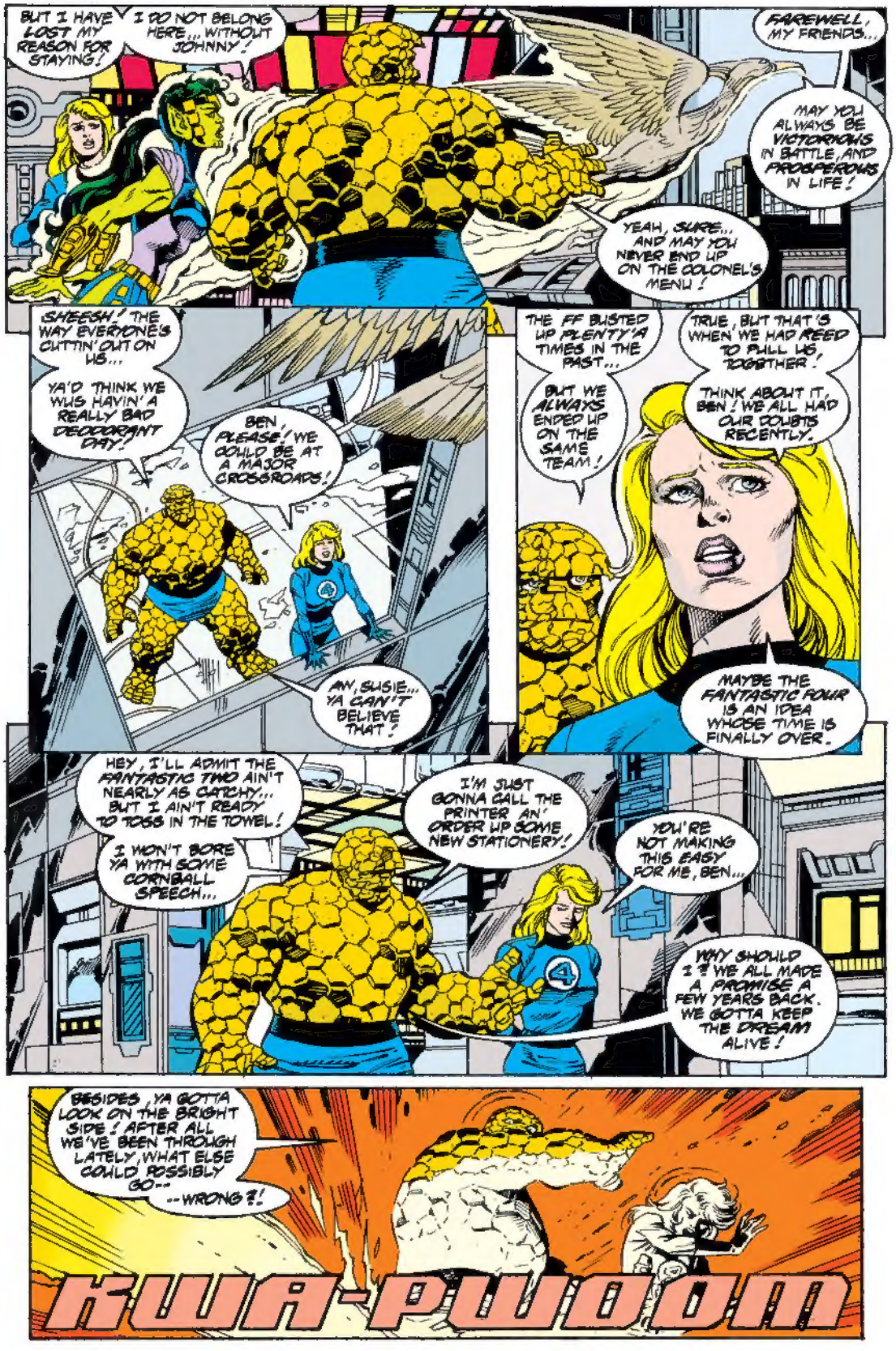
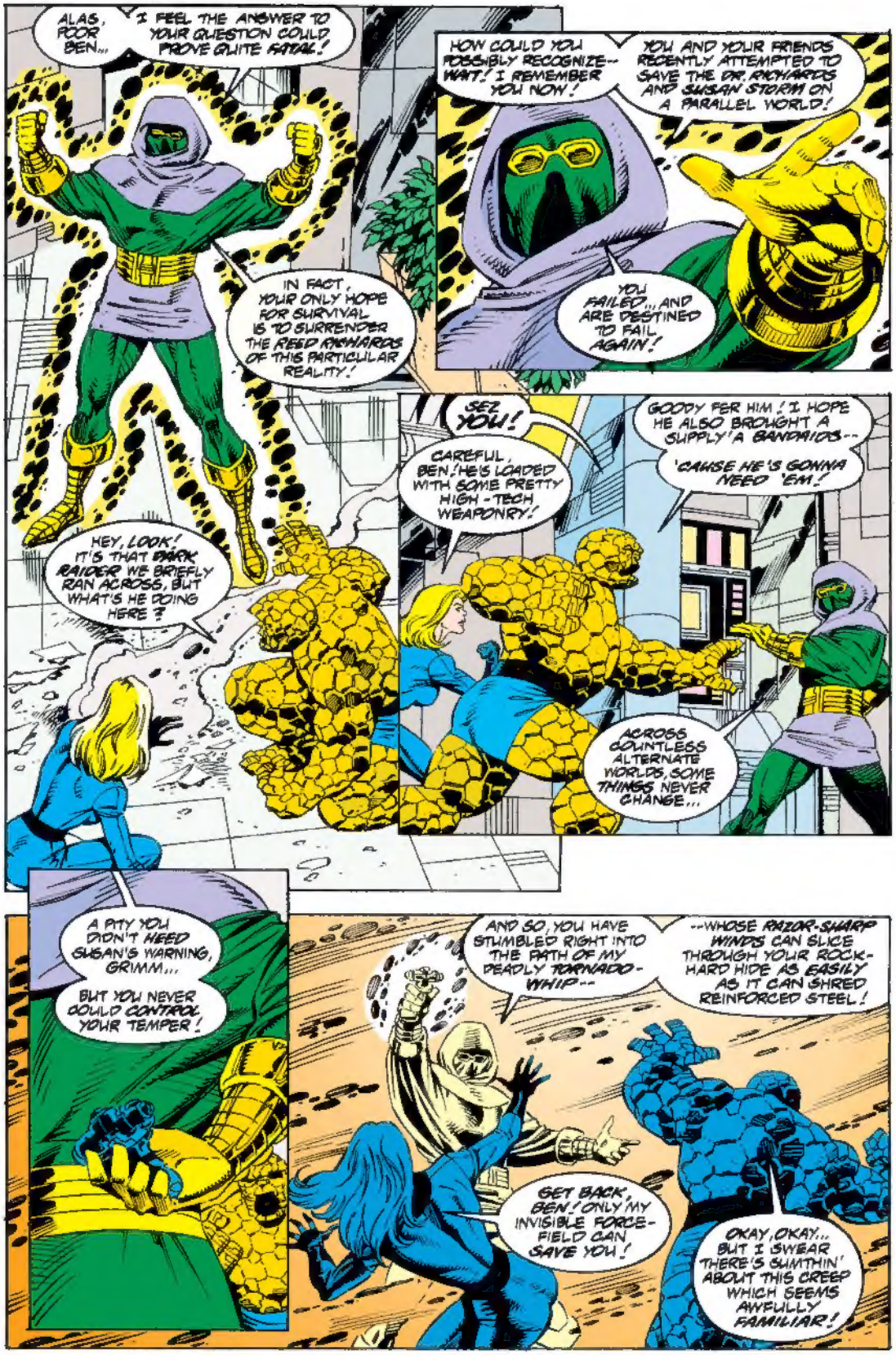

AT THAT PRECISE INSTANT, ON AN ALTERNATE PLANE OF REALITY...
BEHOLD! ONCE AGAIN, THE INSATIABLE CURIOSITY OF THIS PARTICULAR REED RICHARDS PROVES HIS UNDOING!
ONCE MORE, HE RETURNS TOO LATE TO SAVE HIS WORLD!
BUT WE'RE THE ONES WHO BATTLED GALACTUS! HOW'D WE END UP HERE--AND WHO ARE THOSE STIFFS?
EASY, JOHNNY! THE WATCHER MUST HAVE SNATCHED US AT THE LAST POSSIBLE INSTANT... BUT WHY? WHY DID HE SAVE US?!
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE FORBIDDEN TO INTERFERE WITH OTHER RACES!
THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY OUR COUNTERPARTS, BEN!
BUT THIS STILL ISN'T RIGHT! GALACTUS KILLED US! I...I REMEMBER THE PAIN SO VIVIDLY!
IT WAS NEITHER YOUR PROPER TIME... NOR PLACE... TO DIE.
THOUGH WE FAILED IN OUR DESPERATE GAMBLE TO SAVE THAT PARALLEL WORLD, I COULD NOT ALLOW YOU TO SACRIFICE YOURSELVES.
HOGWASH!
YA USED US, BALDY! MANIPULATIN' US LIKE PAWNS FROM THE VERY START!
THAT ISN'T IMPORTANT, BEN! DIDN'T YOU HEAR HIM A SECOND AGO?
HE PRACTICALLY CAME OUT AND SAID THAT HE KNOWS WHERE AND WHEN WE'RE GOING TO DIE!
WHEN IS IT? WHEN?
ALAS, TORCH...
...I AM NOT PERMITTED TO DIVULGE SUCH INFORMATION!
HANG ON! HE'S ZAPPING US OUTTA HERE!
THIS ISN'T FAIR!
IT ISN'T FAIR!
FOR A SEEMINGLY UNENDING INSTANT, THE THREE ADVENTURERS ARE SHROUDED BY INTENSE COLD...

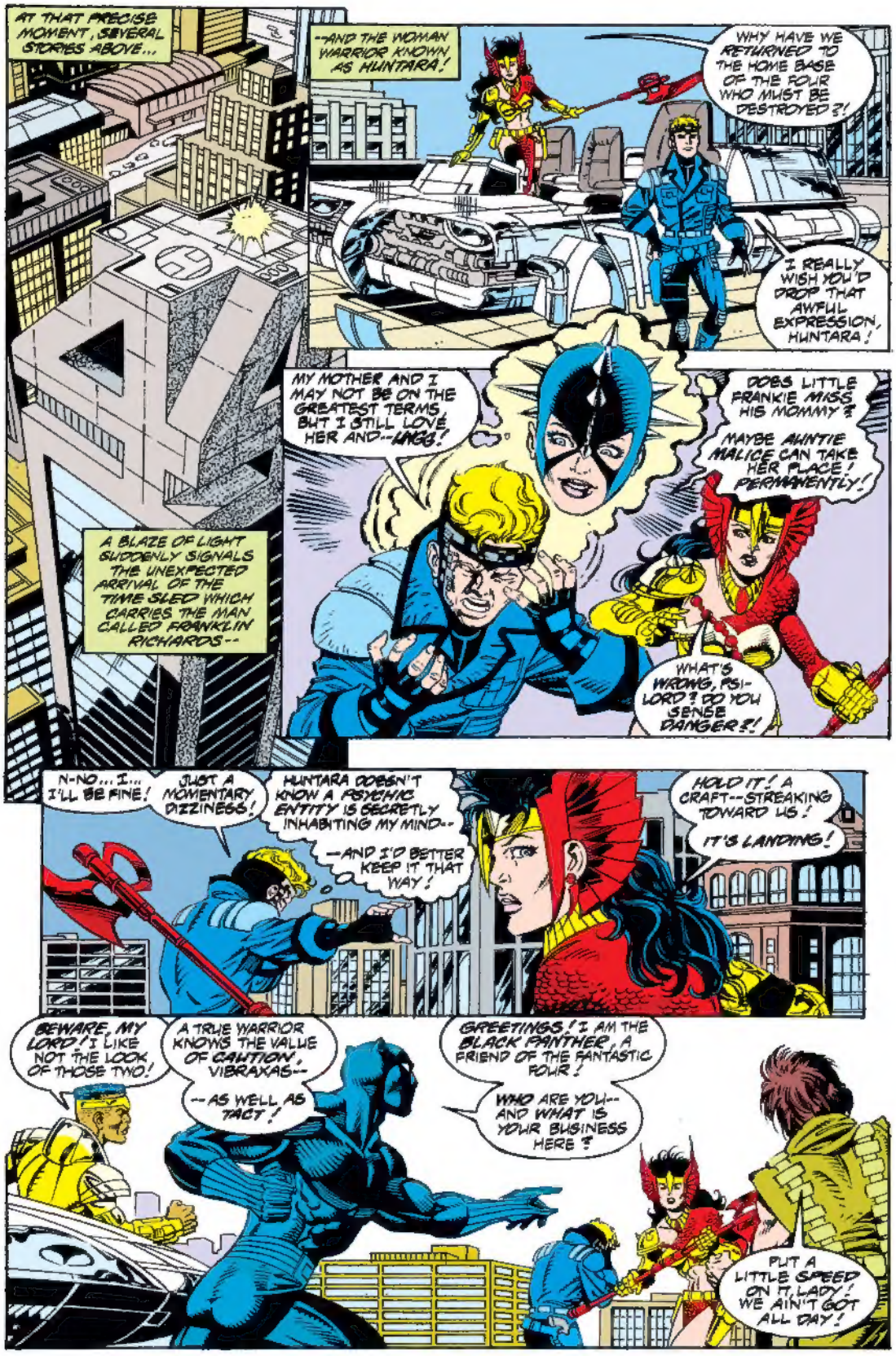

AND THEN...
SHEESH! HE PLOPPED US BACK IN FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA! A GUY LIKE THAT'D BE REAL HANDY IN A SUBWAY STRIKE!
AT LEAST I THINK WE'RE HOME! ALL THIS TIME-JUMPIN' AND DIMENSION-HOPPIN' HAS ME SO CONFUSED, I AIN'T EVEN CONVINCED THAT I'M THE REAL THING!
SUSAN!
I... HE... FEARED YOU WERE ALL DEAD!
HOPE YOU'RE NOT TOO DISAPPOINTED, NAMOR, YOU MIND TELLING ME WHY THIS PLACE IS SUCH A SHAMBLES?
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF LYJA EXPLAINED...
JOHNNY!
THE BURNING IMAGE OF SUE RETURNED, AND I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU!
CALM DOWN, LADY! I ASSUME THAT CARCASS IS ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE IMPLANT WHICH YOU ORIGINALLY TRIED TO PASS OFF AS OUR CHILD!
IT WAS A SHA'BARR!
A MINDLESS CREATURE PROGRAMMED WITH ONLY ONE DESIRE... TO DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
THE DANGER IS FINALLY PASSED, MY LOVE.
WE'RE FREE TO BEGIN LIFE ANEW!
THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR US TO TRULY THINK ABOUT SETTLING DOWN AND STARTING A REAL FAMILY OF OUR OWN!

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME, YOU MISERABLE WITCH!
AFTER THE WAY YOU DECEIVED ME FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, PLAYING ME FOR A TOTAL FOOL...
DID YOU HONESTLY THINK WE COULD EVER HAVE A LIFE TOGETHER?
HOW?! HOW COULD I EVER TRUST YOU AGAIN?!
SIMMER DOWN, KID!
YOU OUGHTA KNOW BETTER'N TO GO FLYIN' OFF THE HANDLE LIKE THAT!
THAT'S MY JOB!
THIS IS NO TIME TO CLOWN AROUND, BEN! NOT WHEN JOHNNY'S SO UPSET!
AW, LET HIM HAVE HIS FUN! I DESERVE IT! THE SAD TRUTH IS THAT MY ENTIRE LIFE IS ONE BIG, PATHETIC JOKE!
BUT I'M DETERMINED TO FIX THAT STARTING NOW!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DO I HAVE TO DRAW YOU A DIAGRAM? I'VE TOLD YOU TIME AND AGAIN THAT I'M THROUGH RISKING MY NECK!
YOU CAN JUST COUNT ME OUT THE NEXT TIME YOU GO OFF TO CHALLENGE THE UNKNOWN!
FROM THIS DAY FORWARD WHENEVER THE HUMAN TORCH FLIES...
...HE FLIES ALONE!

SILENCE SINGES THE AIR FOR A FULL MINUTE, THEN...
I AM CERTAIN HE WILL RECONSIDER, SUSAN.
EVEN IF HE DOES NOT, YOU HAVE ALSO RECENTLY QUESTIONED YOUR OWN MOTIVATIONS FOR REMAINING A MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
UH...SUBBY...MAYBE NOW WOULD BE A GREAT TIME FOR US TO CATCH A QUICK SHRIMP COCKTAIL!
HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES, ANT-MAN?
NO, BUT I DO THINK A LITTLE LEAVE-TAKING IS AN EXCELLENT SUGGESTION!
ESPECIALLY, CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES!
YOU COMING, RAFE?
TWENTY FOUR HOURS AGO, RAPHAEL SUAREZ WAS A SIMPLE COLLEGE STUDENT.
BUT THEN, A FREAK EXPOSURE TO AN ALIEN POWER TRANSMITTER GAVE HIM THE POWER OF THE LASER-FIST!
HE CAME TO THE FF IN THE HOPE THAT THEY COULD HELP HIM LEARN HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND CONTROL HIS NEW POWERS...
NO SUCH LUCK!
YEAH... WAIT FOR ME!
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD GO AS WELL.
THAT ISN'T NECESSARY, LYJA. I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MY BROTHER OR YOUR PAST MISTAKES...
YOU'RE A VALUABLE MEMBER OF THIS TEAM. YOU'VE PROVEN YOURSELF MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER!
THIS IS YOUR HOME!
THANK YOU, SUSAN.
THAT MEANS SO MUCH MORE TO ME THAN I COULD POSSIBLY EXPRESS...


BUT I HAVE LOST MY REASON FOR STAYING!
I DO NOT BELONG HERE... WITHOUT JOHNNY!
FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS...
MAY YOU ALWAYS BE VICTORIOUS IN BATTLE, AND PROSPEROUS IN LIFE!
YEAH, SURE... AND MAY YOU NEVER END UP ON THE COLONEL'S MENU!
SHEESH! THE WAY EVERYONE'S CUTTIN' OUT ON US...
YA'D THINK WE WUS HAVIN' A REALLY BAD DEODORANT DAY!
BEN, PLEASE! WE COULD BE AT A MAJOR CROSSROADS!
AW, SUSIE... YA CAN'T BELIEVE THAT!
THE FF BUSTED UP PLENTY'A TIMES IN THE PAST...
BUT WE ALWAYS ENDED UP ON THE SAME TEAM!
TRUE, BUT THAT'S WHEN WE HAD REED TO PULL US TOGETHER!
THINK ABOUT IT, BEN! WE ALL HAD OUR DOUBTS RECENTLY.
MAYBE THE FANTASTIC FOUR IS AN IDEA WHOSE TIME IS FINALLY OVER.
HEY, I'LL ADMIT THE FANTASTIC TWO AIN'T NEARLY AS CATCHY... BUT I AIN'T READY TO TOSS IN THE TOWEL!
I WON'T BORE YA WITH SOME CORNBALL SPEECH...
I'M JUST GONNA CALL THE PRINTER AN' ORDER UP SOME NEW STATIONERY!
YOU'RE NOT MAKING THIS EASY FOR ME, BEN...
WHY SHOULD I? WE ALL MADE A PROMISE A FEW YEARS BACK. WE GOTTA KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE!
BESIDES, YA GOTTA LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE! AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH LATELY, WHAT ELSE COULD POSSIBLY GO--
--WRONG?!
KWA-PWOOM

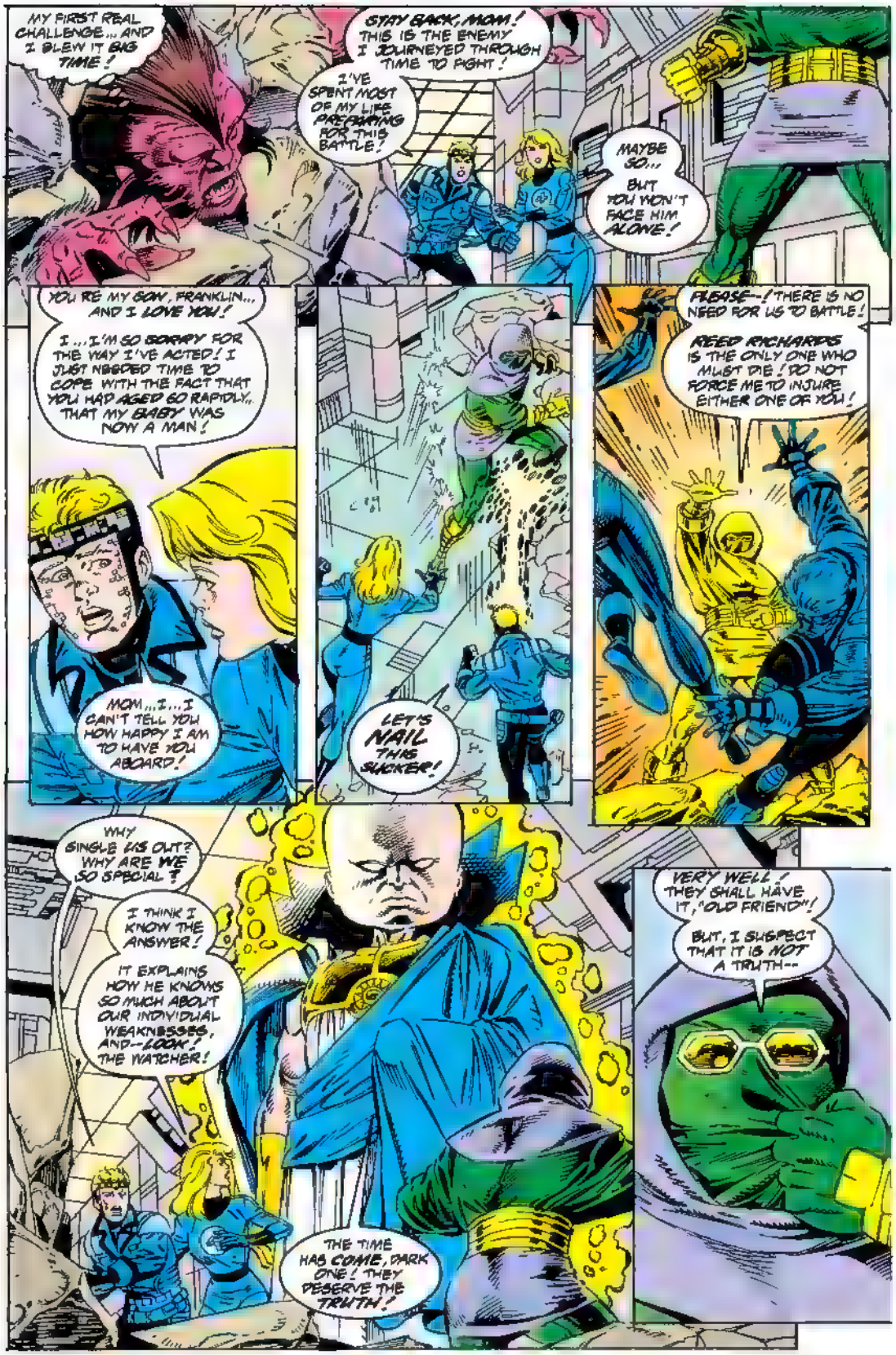

ALAS, POOR BEN...
I FEEL THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION COULD PROVE QUITE FATAL!
IN FACT, YOUR ONLY HOPE FOR SURVIVAL IS TO SURRENDER THE REED RICHARDS OF THIS PARTICULAR REALITY!
HEY, LOOK! IT'S THAT DARK RAIDER WE BRIEFLY RAN ACROSS, BUT WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY RECOGNIZE-- WAIT! I REMEMBER YOU NOW!
YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS RECENTLY ATTEMPTED TO SAVE THE DR. RICHARDS AND SUSAN STORM ON A PARALLEL WORLD!
YOU FAILED... AND ARE DESTINED TO FAIL AGAIN!
SEZ YOU!
CAREFUL, BEN! HE'S LOADED WITH SOME PRETTY HIGH-TECH WEAPONRY!
GOODY FER HIM! I HOPE HE ALSO BROUGHT A SUPPLY O' BANDAIDS--
'CAUSE HE'S GONNA NEED 'EM!
ACROSS COUNTLESS ALTERNATE WORLDS, SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE...
A PITY YOU DIDN'T HEED SUSAN'S WARNING, GRIMM...
BUT YOU NEVER COULD CONTROL YOUR TEMPER!
AND SO, YOU HAVE STUMBLED RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF MY DEADLY TORNADO-WHIP--
--WHOSE RAZOR-SHARP WINDS CAN SLICE THROUGH YOUR ROCK-HARD HIDE AS EASILY AS IT CAN SHRED REINFORCED STEEL!
GET BACK, BEN! ONLY MY INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD CAN SAVE YOU!
OKAY, OKAY... BUT I SWEAR THERE'S SUMTHIN' ABOUT THIS CREEP WHICH SEEMS AWFULLY FAMILIAR!

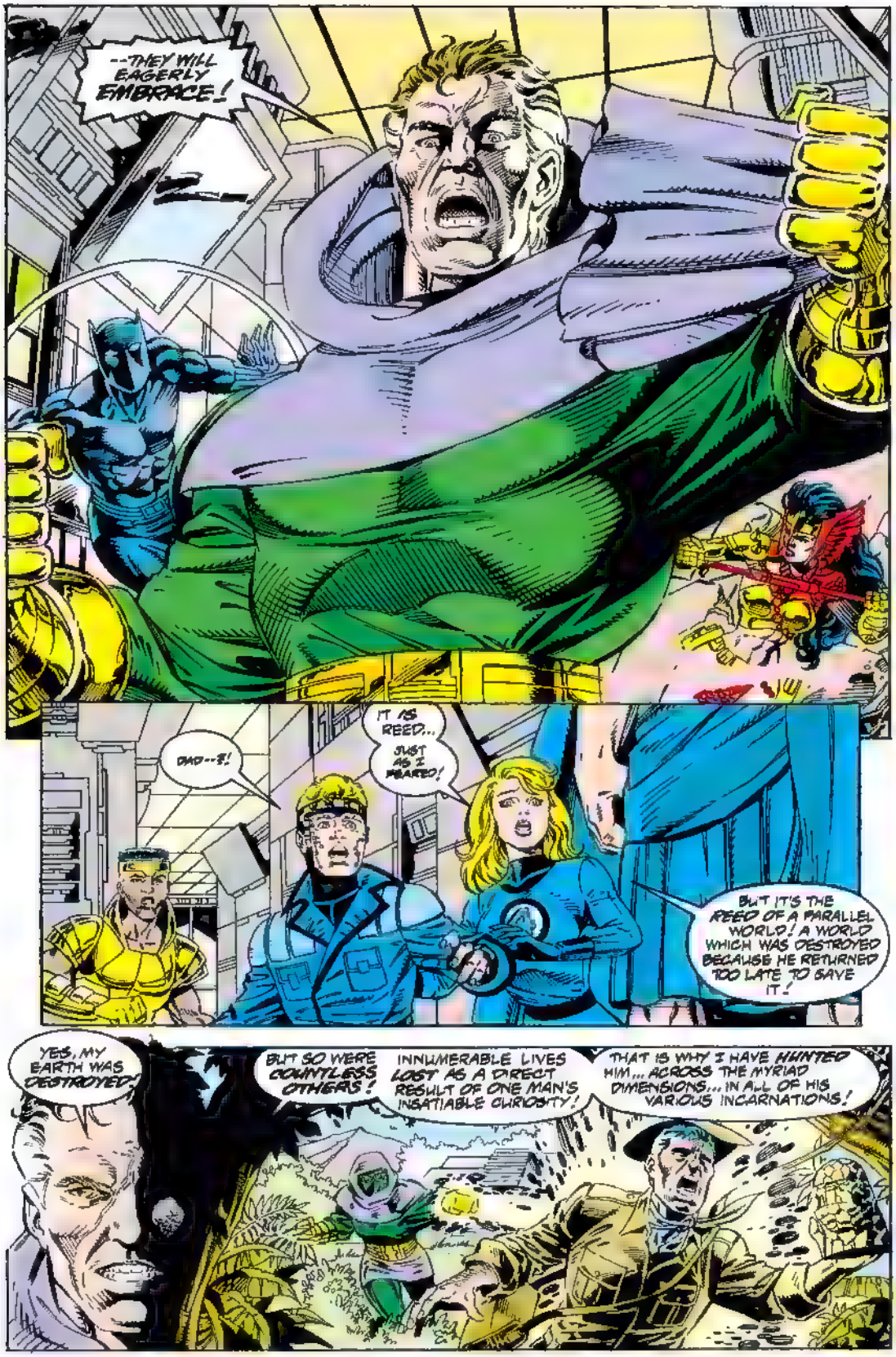

AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, SEVERAL STORIES ABOVE...
A BLAZE OF LIGHT SUDDENLY SIGNALS THE UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL OF THE TIME SLED WHICH CARRIES THE MAN CALLED FRANKLIN RICHARDS--
--AND THE WOMAN WARRIOR KNOWN AS HUNTARA!
WHY HAVE WE RETURNED TO THE HOME BASE OF THE FOUR WHO MUST BE DESTROYED?!
I REALLY WISH YOU'D DROP THAT AWFUL EXPRESSION, HUNTARA!
MY MOTHER AND I MAY NOT BE ON THE GREATEST TERMS, BUT I STILL LOVE HER AND--UNGG!
DOES LITTLE FRANKIE MISS HIS MOMMY?
MAYBE AUNTIE MALICE CAN TAKE HER PLACE! PERMANENTLY!
WHAT'S WRONG, PSI-LORD? DO YOU SENSE DANGER?!
N-NO... I... I'LL BE FINE!
JUST A MOMENTARY DIZZINESS!
HUNTARA DOESN'T KNOW A PSYCHIC ENTITY IS SECRETLY INHABITING MY MIND--
--AND I'D BETTER KEEP IT THAT WAY!
HOLD IT! A CRAFT--STREAKING TOWARD US!
IT'S LANDING!
BEWARE, MY LORD! I LIKE NOT THE LOOK OF THOSE TWO!
A TRUE WARRIOR KNOWS THE VALUE OF CAUTION, VIBRAXAS--
--AS WELL AS TACT!
GREETINGS! I AM THE BLACK PANTHER, A FRIEND OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
WHO ARE YOU--AND WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS HERE?
PUT A LITTLE SPEED ON IT, LADY! WE AIN'T GOT ALL DAY!

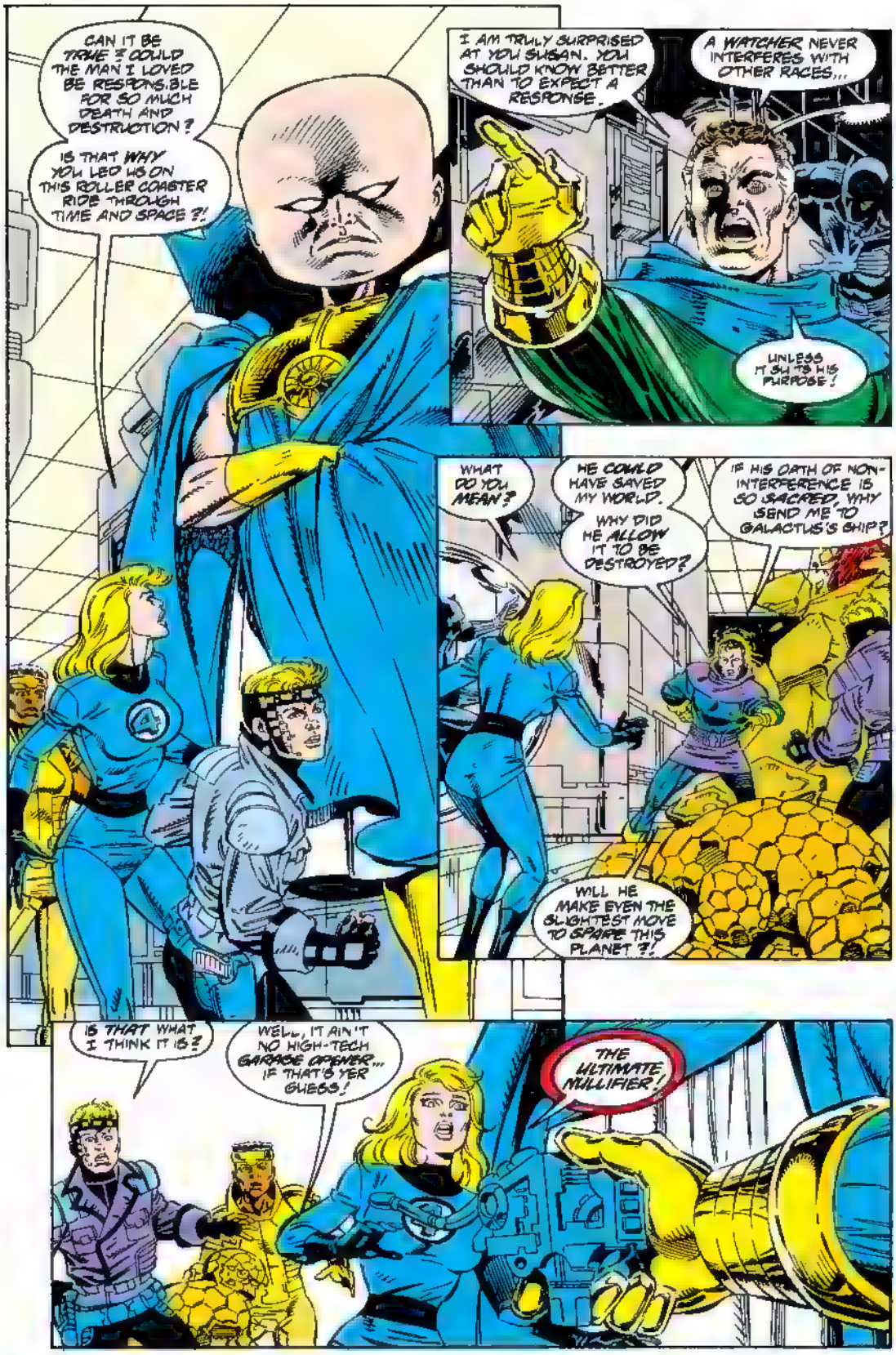
ANSWER THE MAN--
--BEFORE DEVLOR THE DEADLY GETS IN YOUR FACE!
MY ONLY RESPONSE, YOU ILL-MANNERED CUR--
--WILL BE THE SLAP OF MY PSIONIC SCYTHE!
SILENCE... PLEASE!
I HAVE BROUGHT THIS INHUMAN--DEVLOR, AND A WAKANDAN YOUTH--VIBRAXAS HERE, TO SEE IF MY OLD FRIENDS COULD HELP THEM ADJUST TO THEIR NEW POWERS. CAN YOU--
PANTHER! MY MOTHER AND UNCLE ARE IN GRAVE DANGER!
HE'S HERE! THE GREAT [redacted]NEMY OF ALL HUMANITY HAS ARRIVED!
I SENSE THE DARK RAIDER IN THIS VERY BUILDING!
I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, THING...
THIS GAS WILL GEOMETRICALLY INCREASE YOUR LOCAL GRAVITATIONAL FIELD...UNTIL YOU ARE CRUSHED TO THE GROUND!
EVEN WITH HIS VOICE ALL MUFFLED BY THAT DOPEY MASK, THIS JOKER REMINDS ME OF SOMEONE--BUT WHO? WHO?!
=WOO-EEE= IT'S HUMILIATIN' ENUFF GETTIN' SPRAYED BY THIS JUNK!
MAYBE NEXT TIME YA SHOULD THINK ABOUT USING A LIME SCENT!
I'M AFRAID THERE WON'T BE A NEXT TIME, OLD FRIEND!
NOW, THEN... WHERE HAS SUSAN GONE?!
HE TOOK BEN OUT BEFORE I COULD GET INTO POSITION TO LAUNCH MY OWN ATTACK, BUT I CAN'T DELAY ANY LONGER!
IT'S A PITY THAT YOU CANNOT EMPLOY YOUR FORCE FIELDS WHILE INVISIBLE MY DEAR!
NOR CAN YOU CONTINUE TO ELUDE ME!

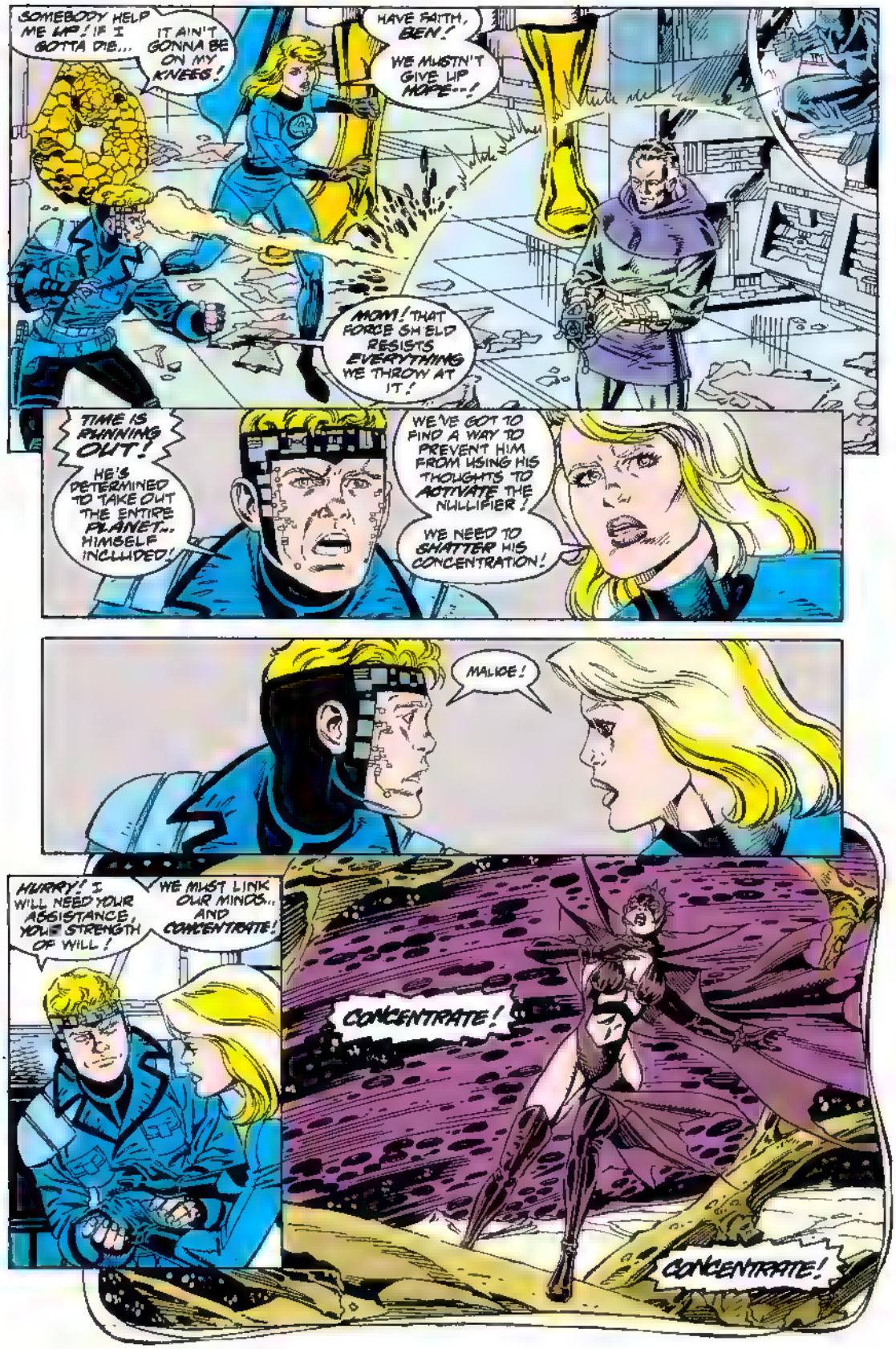
MY MASK IS EQUIPPED WITH SPECIAL HEAT SENSORS, AND--
AH, THERE YOU ARE!
NOW THAT I KNOW WHERE YOU STAND, I CAN EASILY-- WAIT!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE FLOOR?!
WOOOOM
IT IS ONLY A LITTLE VIBRO-SHOCK!
COURTESY OF VIBRAXAS!
WELL DONE, MY YOUNG CHARGE! YOUR QUICK ACTION SERVED TO DISTRACT HIM!
BUT NOW... STAND BACK... WHILE THE BLACK PANTHER TESTS HIS TRUE METTLE!
=SHEESH= THIS AIN'T NO TIME FER TESTS, T'CHALLA! JUST CLOBBER THE CREEP!
YOUR APPEARANCE WAS NOT ANTICIPATED, PANTHER...
BUT I TRY TO PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED!
THIS ENDOSO-GLOBE MAY PROVE THE EQUAL OF EVEN YOUR FAMED FELINE AGILITY!
SEE HOW IT HOMES IN ON YOU, RICOCHETING FASTER AND FASTER!
NO MATTER HOW NIMBLE YOU ARE, YOU MUST TIRE EVENTUALLY, AND THEN--
SKAK
THERE! IT ENDS... AS I KNEW IT WOULD!

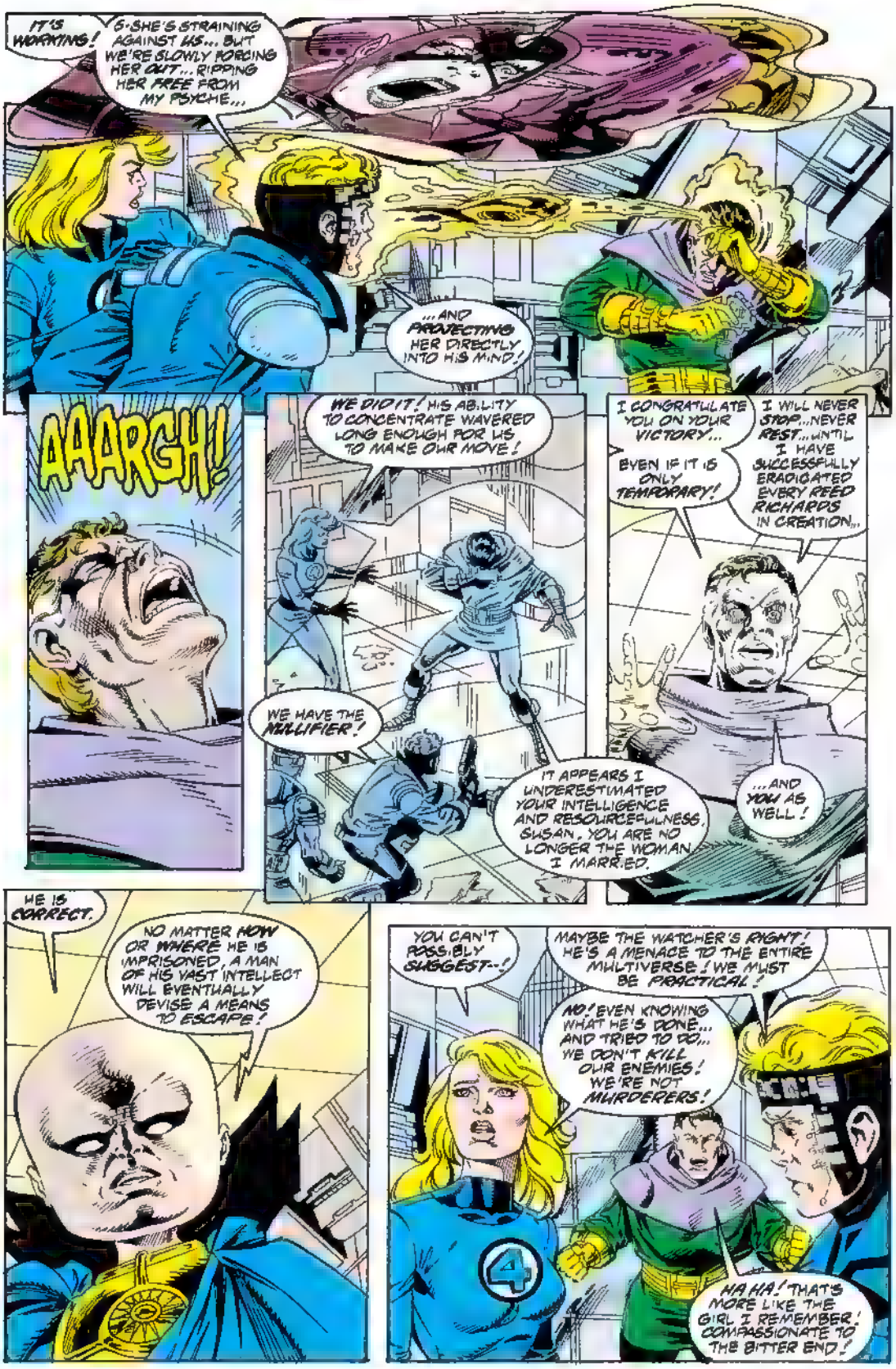
ON THE CONTRARY, MY FRIEND..
THIS BATTLE HAS BARELY BEGUN!
MY FORCE FIELD COULD EASILY SURVIVE A NUCLEAR BLAST--AND YET--YOUR WEAPON CAUSED IT TO QUIVER!
MY SCYTHE CAN EVENTUALLY ADJUST ITS PSIONIC ENERGY TO PENETRATE ANY BARRIER!
IN THAT CASE...
I'D BETTER MAKE A FEW ADJUSTMENTS OF MY OWN!
THE FIELD IS TAKING SHAPE --ATTACKING ME!
I... I DOUBT I'M READY FOR A FIGHT LIKE THIS... BUT I AIN'T GOT MUCH CHOICE!
THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME FOR EVERYONE TO LEARN WHY... DEVLOR IS THE DEADLIEST INHUMAN OF ALL!
YOU MUST BE CONSIDERED DIFFERENT... AN OUTSIDER... EVEN AMONG A RACE WHICH THRIVES ON GENETIC EXPERIMENTATION!
A CHANGE-LING!
AS UNIQUE, IN YOUR OWN WAY, AS ARE THESE CRYSTALS... WHICH GROW TO THE SIZE OF BOULDERS... WHEN EXPOSED TO THE AIR!
INTERESTING! YOU ARE THE ONLY INHUMAN I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED WITH TWO DISTINCT FORMS!
ARRGH! THEY'RE WEIGHING ME DOWN-- CRUSHING ME!


MY FIRST REAL CHALLENGE... AND I BLEW IT BIG TIME!
STAY BACK, MOM! THIS IS THE ENEMY I JOURNEYED THROUGH TIME TO FIGHT!
I'VE SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE PREPARING FOR THIS BATTLE!
MAYBE SO... BUT YOU WON'T FACE HIM ALONE!
YOU'RE MY SON, FRANKLIN... AND I LOVE YOU!
I... I'M SO SORRY FOR THE WAY I'VE ACTED! I JUST NEEDED TIME TO COPE WITH THE FACT THAT YOU HAD AGED SO RAPIDLY... THAT MY BABY WAS NOW A MAN!
MOM... I... I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW HAPPY I AM TO HAVE YOU ABOARD!
LET'S NAIL THIS SLACKER!
PLEASE--! THERE IS NO NEED FOR US TO BATTLE! REED RICHARDS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO MUST DIE! DO NOT FORCE ME TO INJURE EITHER ONE OF YOU!
WHY SINGLE US OUT? WHY ARE WE SO SPECIAL?
I THINK I KNOW THE ANSWER!
IT EXPLAINS HOW HE KNOWS SO MUCH ABOUT OUR INDIVIDUAL WEAKNESSES, AND--LOOK! THE WATCHER!
THE TIME HAS COME, DARK ONE! THEY DESERVE THE TRUTH!
VERY WELL! THEY SHALL HAVE IT, "OLD FRIEND"!
BUT, I SUSPECT THAT IT IS NOT A TRUTH--

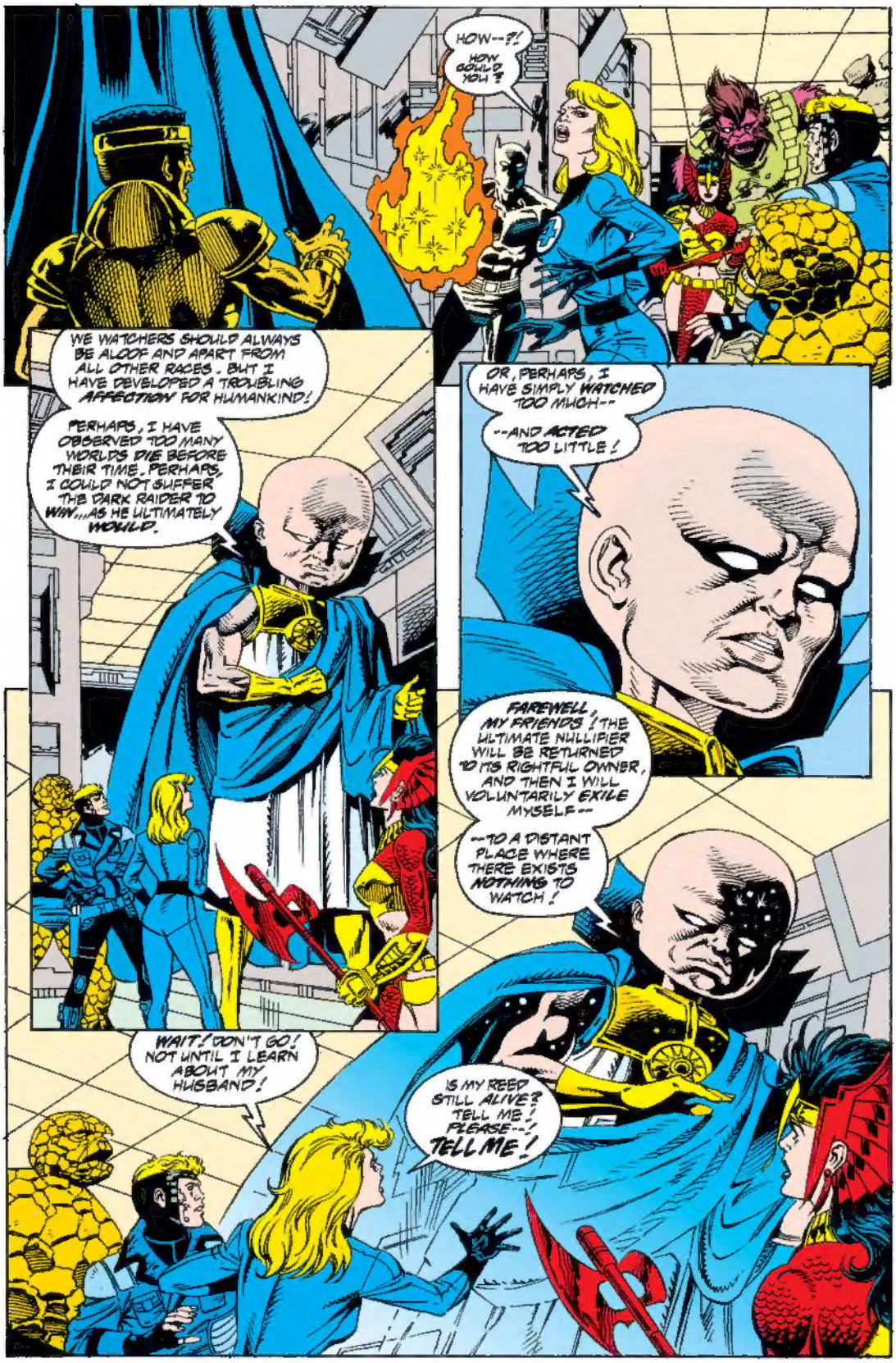

--THEY WILL EAGERLY EMBRACE!
DAD--?!
IT IS REED... JUST AS I FEARED!
BUT IT'S THE REED OF A PARALLEL WORLD! A WORLD WHICH WAS DESTROYED BECAUSE HE RETURNED TOO LATE TO SAVE IT!
YES, MY EARTH WAS DESTROYED!
BUT SO WERE COUNTLESS OTHERS!
INNUMERABLE LIVES LOST AS A DIRECT RESULT OF ONE MAN'S INSATIABLE CURIOSITY!
THAT IS WHY I HAVE HUNTED HIM... ACROSS THE MYRIAD DIMENSIONS... IN ALL OF HIS VARIOUS INCARNATIONS!

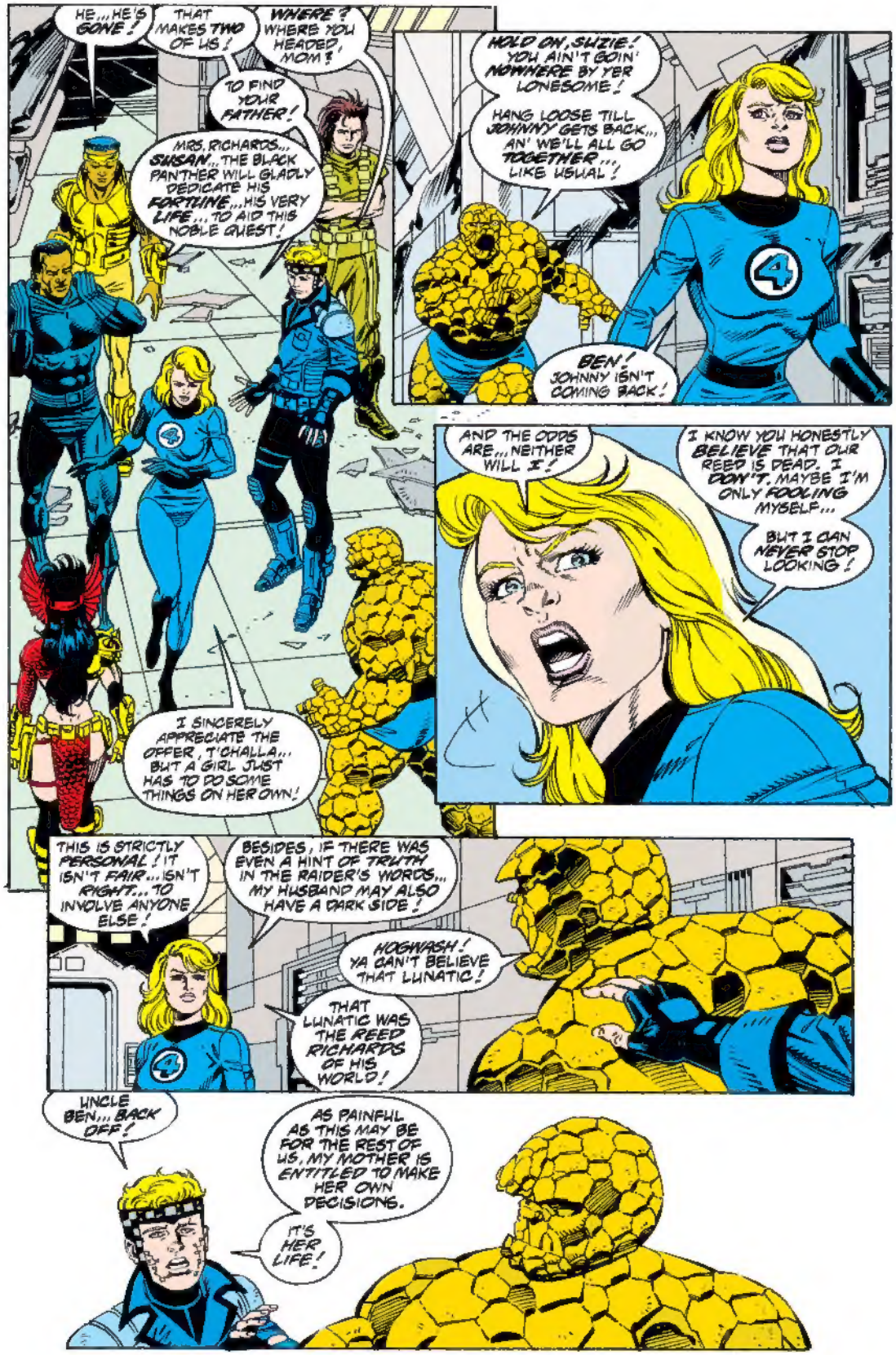

CAN IT BE TRUE? COULD THE MAN I LOVED BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SO MUCH DEATH AND DESTRUCTION?
IS THAT WHY YOU LED US ON THIS ROLLER COASTER RIDE THROUGH TIME AND SPACE?!
I AM TRULY SURPRISED AT YOU SUSAN. YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO EXPECT A RESPONSE.
A WATCHER NEVER INTERFERES WITH OTHER RACES...
UNLESS IT SUITS HIS PURPOSE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HE COULD HAVE SAVED MY WORLD.
WHY DID HE ALLOW IT TO BE DESTROYED?
IF HIS OATH OF NON-INTERFERENCE IS SO SACRED, WHY SEND ME TO GALACTUS'S SHIP?
WILL HE MAKE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST MOVE TO SPARE THIS PLANET?!
IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?
WELL, IT AIN'T NO HIGH-TECH GARAGE OPENER... IF THAT'S YER GUESS!
THE ULTIMATE NULLIFIER!


SOMEBODY HELP ME UP! IF I GOTTA DIE... IT AIN'T GONNA BE ON MY KNEES!
HAVE FAITH, BEN! WE MUSTN'T GIVE UP HOPE--!
MOM! THAT FORCE SHIELD RESISTS EVERYTHING WE THROW AT IT!
TIME IS RUNNING OUT! HE'S DETERMINED TO TAKE OUT THE ENTIRE PLANET... HIMSELF INCLUDED!
WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO PREVENT HIM FROM USING HIS THOUGHTS TO ACTIVATE THE NULLIFIER!
WE NEED TO SHATTER HIS CONCENTRATION!
MALICE!
HURRY! I WILL NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE, YOUR STRENGTH OF WILL!
WE MUST LINK OUR MINDS... AND CONCENTRATE!
CONCENTRATE!
CONCENTRATE!


IT'S WORKING!
S-SHE'S STRAINING AGAINST US... BUT WE'RE SLOWLY FORCING HER OUT... RIPPING HER FREE FROM MY PSYCHE...
...AND PROJECTING HER DIRECTLY INTO HIS MIND!
AAARGH!
WE DID IT! HIS ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE WAVERED LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO MAKE OUR MOVE!
WE HAVE THE NULLIFIER!
I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR VICTORY...
EVEN IF IT IS ONLY TEMPORARY!
I WILL NEVER STOP...NEVER REST...UNTIL I HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ERADICATED EVERY REED RICHARDS IN CREATION...
IT APPEARS I UNDERESTIMATED YOUR INTELLIGENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS, SUSAN. YOU ARE NO LONGER THE WOMAN I MARRIED.
...AND YOU AS WELL!
HE IS CORRECT.
NO MATTER HOW OR WHERE HE IS IMPRISONED, A MAN OF HIS VAST INTELLECT WILL EVENTUALLY DEVISE A MEANS TO ESCAPE!
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY SUGGEST--!
MAYBE THE WATCHER'S RIGHT! HE'S A MENACE TO THE ENTIRE MULTIVERSE! WE MUST BE PRACTICAL!
NO! EVEN KNOWING WHAT HE'S DONE... AND TRIED TO DO... WE DON'T KILL OUR ENEMIES! WE'RE NOT MURDERERS!
HA HA! THAT'S MORE LIKE THE GIRL I REMEMBER! COMPASSIONATE TO THE BITTER END!

I FEARED YOU WOULD HAVE SUCH A REACTION! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED A HIGH STANDARD OF HUMAN MORALITY!
TOO HIGH IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE!
THUS, AFTER ENDLESS CENTURIES OF INACTION, THE TIME FOR PASSIVE OBSERVATION MUST COME TO AN ABRUPT END--
--AND THE WATCHER MUST NOW ACT!


HOW--?!
HOW COULD YOU?
WE WATCHERS SHOULD ALWAYS BE ALOOF AND APART FROM ALL OTHER RACES. BUT I HAVE DEVELOPED A TROUBLING AFFECTION FOR HUMANKIND!
PERHAPS, I HAVE OBSERVED TOO MANY WORLDS DIE BEFORE THEIR TIME. PERHAPS, I COULD NOT SUFFER THE DARK RAIDER TO WIN...AS HE ULTIMATELY WOULD.
OR, PERHAPS, I HAVE SIMPLY WATCHED TOO MUCH--
--AND ACTED TOO LITTLE!
FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS! THE ULTIMATE NULLIFIER WILL BE RETURNED TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER, AND THEN I WILL VOLUNTARILY EXILE MYSELF--
--TO A DISTANT PLACE WHERE THERE EXISTS NOTHING TO WATCH!
WAIT! DON'T GO! NOT UNTIL I LEARN ABOUT MY HUSBAND!
IS MY REED STILL ALIVE? TELL ME! PLEASE--! TELL ME!


HE...HE'S GONE!
THAT MAKES TWO OF US!
WHERE? WHERE YOU HEADED, MOM?
TO FIND YOUR FATHER!
MRS. RICHARDS... SUSAN... THE BLACK PANTHER WILL GLADLY DEDICATE HIS FORTUNE... HIS VERY LIFE... TO AID THIS NOBLE QUEST!
I SINCERELY APPRECIATE THE OFFER, T'CHALLA... BUT A GIRL JUST HAS TO DO SOME THINGS ON HER OWN!
HOLD ON, SUZIE! YOU AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE BY YER LONESOME!
HANG LOOSE TILL JOHNNY GETS BACK... AN' WE'LL ALL GO TOGETHER... LIKE USUAL!
BEN! JOHNNY ISN'T COMING BACK!
AND THE ODDS ARE... NEITHER WILL I!
I KNOW YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT OUR REED IS DEAD. I DON'T. MAYBE I'M ONLY FOOLING MYSELF...
BUT I CAN NEVER STOP LOOKING!
THIS IS STRICTLY PERSONAL! IT ISN'T FAIR... ISN'T RIGHT... TO INVOLVE ANYONE ELSE!
BESIDES, IF THERE WAS EVEN A HINT OF TRUTH IN THE RAIDER'S WORDS... MY HUSBAND MAY ALSO HAVE A DARK SIDE!
HOGWASH! YA CAN'T BELIEVE THAT LUNATIC!
THAT LUNATIC WAS THE REED RICHARDS OF HIS WORLD!
UNCLE BEN... BACK OFF!
AS PAINFUL AS THIS MAY BE FOR THE REST OF US, MY MOTHER IS ENTITLED TO MAKE HER OWN DECISIONS.
IT'S HER LIFE!

JUST BRING AN EXTRA QUARTER FER A PHONE CALL...
IN CASE YA EVER NEED A RIDE HOME!
THE GOODBYES ARE SOFTLY WHISPERED, FULL OF UNSHED TEARS...
AND ALL TOO BRIEF!
WITH A FINAL WAVE, AND A CHOKED SIGH, SUSAN RICHARDS ACTIVATES THE TIME SLED...
IS THAT IT, MY FRIEND? HAS HISTORY FINALLY SEEN THE LAST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR?
MAYBE SO, PAL...
BUT NUTHIN' AND NO ONE CAN STOP ME FROM CONTINUIN' THE DREAM, EVEN IF I GOTTA FLY SOLO AS...
THE FANTASTIC ONE!!
THE END... FOR NOW!